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8-17 February 2006
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)

Statement submitted by Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.5/2006/1.

05-64378 (E) 030106

Statement

On the occasion of this 44th session of the Commission on Social Development that marks the 10-year Review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, my NGO calls to mind that the Resolution of 1996 adopted by the General Assembly (A/RES/51/178) expressed serious concern that of the more than 1.3 billion people in the world living in absolute poverty, a majority were women. The resolution also recognized that Fourth World Conference on Women committed itself to the eradication of poverty. Moreover, it called upon all Governments and the United Nations system to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective and to use gender analysis as a tool for the integration of a gender dimension into the planning and implementation of policies, strategies and programs on poverty eradication. It additionally called upon all UN institutions, including Bretton Woods, to promote and contribute to women's increased access to micro-credit and related financial services for self-employment and income-generating activities for those living in poverty.

In reviewing these resolutions, it is disheartening to say that poverty remains a feminized phenomenon where, in any poverty population, up to 70% tend to be women. As noted in the most recent Human Development report, "gender disparities are among the deepest and most pervasive of inequalities."[1] This disparity is entrenched into the institutions of societies and is entwined with the widespread phenomenon of violence against women, of which the increasing trafficking of women for sexual exploitation is only the most recent and most egregious manifestation.

Despite NGOs' insistent voices to implement gender justice into all sectors of public policy, despite Millennium Development Goal #3, and despite a reaffirmation of gender equality in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (see General Assembly resolution A/60/1), very little effective action takes place in order to alter the male dominant paradigm in social, economic and political life.

As expressed by women in the grassroots projects of my NGO in their submissions to the UN Division for the Advancement of Women in preparation for the Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Women for 2006:

> "We cannot remain indifferent to the unfortunate position of women in society ... It is time that governments, leaders, and all together joined hands in building a better world for women, a better world for all. In Kenya, almost 99 per cent of the women in prostitution would quit if they had alternative way of earning."
>
> Regarding Women, "The laws in our country (Peru) are given, but there are deficiencies in their application and in other cases their regulation is not adapted to the reality."
>
> "The logistics and support system for survivors of gender-based violence from the focal point of lodging a police report, collection of data and evidence, medical examination of the survivor, treatment of physical injuries and

[1] Human Development Report 2005, *International cooperation at a crossroads: Aid, trade and security in an unequal world.*

psychological trauma right through to the care and support for survivor in Malaysia does not meet even minimum standards."

"Economic and financial violence cannot be separated from the violence caused by prostitution. (Senegal) One of the causes is the basic needs. A majority of these young women came from the rural areas, leaving their villages with hopes in their hearts to look for a greener pasture in the city. In many cases, the parents pushed their daughters to engage in prostitution to help support their daily needs. Often the young prostitutes are also orphans. On the other hand, the widows and women who are separated from their husbands engaged in this work to support their children: for food, shelter and education. When a family breaks up, the husband ignores his responsibility, he abandons the family and the woman takes all the responsibilities. This is where I link prostitution and economic violence as one. With the 31 women I met and talked to (from November 2004-February 2005), their cases are almost the same ... They were economically deprived. They got themselves into prostitution as the fastest way to earn for a living."

The NGO endorsers of this statement appeal to this Commission on Social Development with hope since the Copenhagen documents deal holistically and broadly with justice, human rights, and economic development.

We urge this Commission to:

Raise a strong voice and use its influence to promote gender equality and to put an end to all forms of violence against women, including the prostitution and trafficking of women.

Reiterate the analysis of the report of Social Watch 2005 that explains that economic "reforms" that dismantle social obligations of the state and privatize public goods "impact disproportionately on women and deepen gender inequality."[2]

Stipulate the need for structurally mainstreamed gender economic policies so that women have access to financial services for self-employment and income-generating activities.

Remind all governments of the need to make a priority the implementation the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the requirements of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, including its optional protocol.

The NGO endorsers of this statement urge governments to:

1. Adopt and actively enforce anti-trafficking legislation using the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others and the recent UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. (See: Report of the Secretary-General, Trafficking in Women and Girls, 28 July 2004 A/59/185, para #6).

[2] Social Watch 2005, *Roars and Whispers: Promise vs. Action*, Recommendations, Benchmark 3.

2. Sign and enforce the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

3. Include in States-parties' mandated reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, relative to article 6 of the convention, an evaluation of the legal status of the prostitution of women, including efforts to prosecute perpetrators, decriminalize women in prostitution, and penalize the demand. Include NGO perspectives in all reports to the Committee.

4. Articulate a coherent national policy in favor of the dignity of women and girls that explicitly denounces prostitution as a violation of the human rights of women and rejects its legalization.

5. Implement universal primary and secondary education for girls, with no school fees. Enact family support mechanisms so that families do not suffer financially when girls go to school.

6. Ensure universal access to all health services for women and girls.

7. Enact legislation that ensures economic rights to women, including property rights, access to sustainable employment, adequate labor protection, and access to financial services.

8. Enact policies and laws that end impunity for perpetrators of any form of violence against women and girls.

9. Use gender analysis as a tool for the integration of a gender dimension into the planning and implementation of policies, strategies and programs on poverty eradication. Set explicit measures to achieve gender equality. Use a concept of poverty that includes not only household income measurement but takes account of dimensions such as economic autonomy and gender violence, as supported by the Social Watch report of 2005.[3]

This review of the Decade for the Eradication of Poverty is an opportunity for new energy and new commitment for policies that will be effective in poverty reduction. In conclusion, I repeat the words of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) executive director, Thoraya Ahmed Obaid who said at the launch of the 2005 United Nations State of World Population Report:[4] "world leaders will not make poverty history until they make gender discrimination history. We cannot make poverty history until we stop violence against women and girls. We cannot make poverty history until women enjoy their full social, cultural, economic, and political rights."

Note:

The statement is endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council:

[3] Social Watch 2005, *Roars and Whispers: Promise vs. Action*, Gender and Poverty: A case of entwined inequalities, pg. 40.

[4] Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UNFPA's executive director, Launch of the United Nations State of World Population Report 2005, 10/12/05.

Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Congregations of St. Joseph, Dominican Leadership Conference, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, International Federation of Women Lawyers, International Kolping Society, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, League of Women Voters of the United States, Loretto Community, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, Soroptimist International, UNANIMA International and World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations

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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)

Statement submitted by International Movement ATD Fourth World, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Elizabeth Seton Federation and International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Loretto Community, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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The 44th session of the Commission on Social Development marks the end of a 10-year period of global attention to the elimination of poverty. The major focus of this Commission is the review of the 1st UN Decade to Eliminate Poverty. During past years the Monterrey Consensus, the Millennium Development Goals, the 10-year review of Copenhagen, and the Millennium Summit have underscored the global urgency to eradicate poverty. Despite this, we have not yet reached a turning point; poverty intensifies despite a concurrent creation of immense global wealth.

While it is possible to point to some isolated successes in reducing poverty, there is no systemic or structural reduction of poverty. On the contrary, the rate of poverty is on the rise worldwide and economic inequality is growing scandalously and dangerously. According to 2005 Human Development Report, 1/5 of humanity survives on less than $1 a day while the richest 1/5th of humanity thinks nothing of spending $2 daily for a cup of coffee.[1] The Human Development Report of 2005 further warns, "There is real danger that the next 10 years will deliver far less for Human Development than has been promised."[2] We must, as a global community of nations and NGOs, be disgraced and shamed by the situations of dire and extreme poverty at the end of the UN Decade to Eliminate Poverty. Let us further name that the poverty of which we speak is not a statistic or distant reality in any nation. It is the concrete and painful denial of food, inaccessibility of potable water, limitation of basic shelter and basic health protection to children and families for whom education and dignified employment is a distant dream. Poverty is a death sentence that belies a commitment to Human Rights.

We remind this Commission that in 1996 the General Assembly[3] declared that poverty eradication is "an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind." We further remind this Commission that, in the words delivered at Copenhagen, "heads of State and Government are committed to a political, economic, ethical and spiritual vision for social development that is based on human dignity, human rights, equality, respect, peace, democracy, mutual responsibility and cooperation, and full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of people. Accordingly, we will give the highest priority in national, regional and international policies and actions to the promotion of social progress, justice and the betterment of the human condition, based on full participation by all."

It is this commitment by the United Nations governments to "full participation by all" that we highlight in this statement. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan said this past October on The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, "poverty can be reduced only if we reach out to the poorest of the poor, including those often excluded from the development process. Only through partnerships with them, and by taking steps to tackle inequality, can we eradicate poverty in all its dimensions[4]." Additionally, this very Commission at Copenhagen recognized "that empowering people, particularly women, to strengthen their own capacities is a main objective of development and

[1] Summary, Human Development Report 2005, International cooperation the crossroads: Aid, Trade and security in an unequal world. UNDP, 1 Un Plaza New York, NY 10017 Pg 17
[2] Summary, Human Development Report 2005, International cooperation the crossroads: Aid, Trade and security in an unequal world. UNDP, 1 Un Plaza New York, NY 10017 Pg 16
[3] GENERAL A/RES/51/178, 11 February 1997
[4] Secretary-General, SG/SM/10163, OBV/515

its principal resource. Empowerment requires the full participation of people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions determining the functioning and well-being of our societies.[5]"

We make this statement to the Commission knowing that remedies are possible. It has become a "truism" of our time that for the first time in history we have at our disposal the resources, skills and technology to end poverty. We know from the experience of our NGOs, whose organizations serve in educational, social service, development, human rights and gender programs that span north to south and east to west, that full participation and empowerment of those affected by poverty is essential to progress. Encouraged by the 2005 theme of the International Day for poverty eradication, *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals - empowering the poorest of the poor,* we appeal to governments to give due attention in all strategies to eliminate poverty, to various methodologies and modes of empowerment, and to participation for those who live in conditions of poverty. One size does not fit all peoples. Unless the primary stakeholders – that is, persons who live in conditions of poverty – are involved in policymaking and decision-making on issues that affect their lives, any poverty reduction program is bound to continued failure. Unfortunately, we have experienced very little by way of governments empowering and engaging the participation of local communities in turning the tide of poverty. Poverty reduction cannot be imposed from the outside; rather, it must effectively engage the energies and activities of local communities. However, those who live in conditions of poverty have been historically and structurally excluded, not only due to poverty but also due to crosscutting issues of gender, race, age, religious beliefs, immigration status, sexual orientation; implementation of real participation will require affirmative changes in structures and processes with a creative commitment to a human rights approach that links economic structures to the human person.

More often we experience macroeconomic strategies with little intersection of microeconomic realties. In areas of trade and international finance we have not seen the primary stakeholders, that is, those living in conditions of poverty invited to the tables of planning, decision-making and implementation strategies. We do not see those living in conditions of poverty having any say in budget allocations for education or water projects. Participation on levels of analysis, definition, implementation and evaluation intrinsically links the process of poverty reduction to collective self-determination. NGOs have stated repeatedly and will continue to insist that the individual person is the subject and center of all development. Therefore, participation on all levels must necessarily be the driving principle of decisions and policies.

We offer to this Commission a snapshot of our experience, from which we have learned that greater participation leads to success at elimination of poverty and to empowerment of communities. The "neighborhood parliaments" of southern India is one creative, inclusive approach that can be widely applicable and is already echoed in practices such as the Basic Communities of Latin America, community-based monitoring and "neighborhood clustering approach" in the Philippines, and the "ayalkkoottams" or neighborhood assemblies organized in regions of India. In neighborhood parliaments viable participation requires forums that insist on the inclusion of the least or the "small"

[5] World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development - Part B

people with "small voices." This is the crux of the whole issue of participation - forums are small, accessible and inclusive. Experience teaches that the larger a forum becomes, the small voices get drowned out. Small neighborhood parliaments are organized so as not to exceed thirty families each. The people at the base have an active say in matters that affect them - in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs. In one instance more than seven thousand neighborhood parliaments of children/adolescents were activated in a single district, linked at village, inter-village, block, and district levels. These multitiered federations of neighborhood parliaments are based on principles and structures that ensure:

Power is immediate and local;
Representation is by numerical equality;
Process is characterized by interactivity;
Representation is flexible with the ability to change if the group is dissatisfied;
Decision-making is at the lowest levels possible;
Structure is reinforced for use by many community activities such as small savings.

In the neighborhood parliaments promoted by NGOs, children became the agents of social change. They were, in one example, able to identify the school dropouts in their own parliaments and presented the statistics to the district authorities, thus enabling more children to go to school. We know this has a direct affect on poverty eradication. Likewise neighborhood parliament participants were able to involve themselves to solve other civic issues regarding roads, streetlights, sanitation, and child labor. The poor women of the neighborhood parliaments had a small savings scheme and were able to function as a bank for themselves. The community identified the extreme poor by the nine poverty risk factors that were promoted by UNICEF. The extreme poor were the priority for any benefit whether for a loan from the group, banks or government. The State Government of Kerala, India provided State budgeting support for the development of the local government structures (Panchayats.) Neighborhood clusters were able to develop needs-based community plans and the communities became the watchdogs for the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programs.

We also note, for the encouragement of the Commission, that NGOs have utilized and gathered best practices that are available to governments. It was with eagerness in 2003, in partnership with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, that the Sub-Committee for the Eradication of Poverty of the NGO Committee for Social Development published a booklet "Best Practices in Poverty Eradication: Case Studies from the Field," which we made available to governments and can now be found on the website in 3 languages: English, French and Spanish. It can be accessed at: http://www.franciscansinternational.org/resources/publications.php.

Our NGOs are prepared to partner with governments toward greater participation and empowerment of those whose lives are characterized by material poverty yet who have such richness of human spirit to offer the world. We remind states "that it is the primary responsibility of States to attain these

goals."[6] Our organizations are working in many creative ways with communities in the field. We seek, as they do, access and partnership with governments which have a true vision of human rights and empowerment.

Following the ethical, social, political and economic imperatives of the Copenhagen Document we repeat the following principles that are the responsibility of governments:

- Assurance of full participation of the people, especially those who presently suffer the effects of poverty, in all strategies to eliminate poverty.

- Implementation of economic and social strategies that will include dignified employment available to all who can work.

- Reordering of society and economic structures so that accumulation of extreme wealth will be eliminated and priority given to equitable use of resources that are limited.

To this end we recommend that,

- Governments allocate and sustain resources to development projects that ensure local participation of all people, including: the elderly, adults, the young, and children; women as well as men; the self-employed, the employed, the not employed, and those who work in informal sectors; the physically able and those who suffer disabilities; the citizens of every country and nation, indigenous people, those who are not citizens, and refugees and immigrants.

- Governments evaluate, in a timely manner, the policies, criteria, and structures in place for development and eradication of poverty to determine that goals and objectives have been effective in doing what they were set to accomplish and in order to set new and more effective directions for progress in the eradication of poverty.

- That as part of the UN reform process the UN Security Council and all UN entities reallocate seats to ensure more equitable representation of all nations and sectors.

- That all international agencies and monetary institutions such as IMF, World Bank and WTO, include primary stakeholders (i.e., people who live in conditions of poverty) to participate directly in board of directors and planning committees.

- That this Commission and other UN bodies promulgate, in strong and urgent terms, a moral and ethical message to those people and places where wealth is accumulated in excess or where resources of the world are controlled by a minority, that there is a moral

[6] World Summit for Social Development. Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development - Part B, # 27

imperative, a human rights imperative, that all persons have access to basic goods and livelihood, even at the cost of divestment for redistribution.

We understand that participation requires the bridging of differences. It requires outreach to and understanding of the interests of various parties. It requires changes in the dominant economic and social paradigm. It requires, perhaps most of all, political will. For as the 2005 World Summit Outcome[7] states, "We remain concerned… with the slow and uneven progress towards poverty eradication…" This same body, said: "We strongly reiterate our determination to ensure the timely and full realization of the development goals and objectives agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits, including those agreed at the Millennium Summit that are described as the Millennium Development Goals, which have helped to galvanize efforts towards poverty eradication."[8] The timely realization for poverty eradication is now. The full realization of poverty eradication includes the participation, empowerment, and decision making of all.

Note:

Statement endorsed and supported by International Council of Jewish Women, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Soroptimist International and VIVAT International, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; World Christian Life Community, a non-governmental organization on the Roster.

[7] GA: 2005 World Summit Outcome (A/60/L.1) 15 September 15, 2005, # 19

[8] GA: 2005 World Summit Outcome (A/60/L.1) 15 September 15, 2005, # 17

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Poverty Eradication – Learnings From The Economy of Communion Project

In line with the United Nations Commission for Social Development's "Review of the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)," non-governmental organizations, international institutions, civil society, and private businesses face major responsibilities in the struggle to alleviate misery in the world. In this regard, the international NGO New Humanity offers for consideration by the Commission on Social Development, The Economy of Communion (EoC) Project consisting of companies with the primary goal of making a profit that they then can freely choose to use in creating jobs for the unemployed and to distribute much of the profits to benefit victims of poverty. They allocate one part of the profits to retained earning, a second part to people in need, and the third portion to advance the ideals of the Economy of Communion.

This proposal seemed to defy any economic logic, yet after fourteen years, 797 companies are today involved in the EoC. These include: 226 in Italy, 178 in Western Europe, 65 in Eastern Europe, 122 in Brazil, 60 in Argentina, 44 in Central America, 43 in North America, 41 in Asia, mainly the Philippines, 8 in Australia, 7 in Africa and 3 in the Middle East. They vary from small and medium-sized companies in various economic sectors: 202 in production, 159 in commerce, 385 in various services, and 51 others. They include 200 corporations, 58 partnerships, 288 individual proprietors, 30 co-operatives, and 15 non-profits, among others. Forty-eight companies have sales ranging from $1 million to $60 million. Seven companies have sales that exceed $10 million.

The Economy of Communion entrepreneurs agree to meet expected quality requirements and to provide socially responsible products and services, to pay taxes, not to pay bribes, to avoid polluting the environment, and to operate in an open manner with their employees, the public administration, and competitors in what we call reasonable "economic disarmament."

Beginning with the entrepreneur who has the power to mould his/her company according to his/her values and beliefs, the EoC seeks to put the human person in the forefront. The EoC highlights the figure of the entrepreneur, who, it claims, does not seem well represented by the "Homo Economicus", the model of a human person with the single goal of personal utility who only applies the logic of rational self-interest in decision making.

The EoC project stems from a "spiritual humus" that gives the EoC its identity and meaning. While maintaining a continuous and fruitful dialogue with various expressions of social economics, the EoC follows its own trajectory. Vera Araujo, a sociologist who has tracked this project from its inception, described the culture from which it has emerged in this way. The "EoC isn't a matter of being generous, of giving charity; it is not philanthropy or merely a way of providing assistance. It has to do with acknowledging and living the dimension of giving and giving of oneself as essential to one's own existence."

Solidarity in a spirit of "Brotherhood/Sisterhood"

In envisioning and carrying out business in this way while remaining fully inserted in the market, the experience of the EoC integrates the market and civil society, efficiency and solidarity, economy and communion. This creates a non-trivial model. If a market economy aims towards a sustainable future

for humanity and the eradication of poverty, it must allow for the development of behavior founded on socially responsible principles.

Three fundamental principles sustain most human communities: exchange, redistribution of wealth, and charitable giving. In the course of history, communities have existed without exchange but no communities have ever survived without some form of charitable giving. In our view, market economies that depend almost exclusively on the principles of contracts have a tremendous need to integrate these principles with the private sector's "principle of unconditional giving." How can we justify the extension of unconditional giving from the private sphere – which no one contests – to the economic sphere, i.e., to markets? Since the late 18th century, free people have espoused the goals of liberty, equality, and brotherhood/sisterhood. Liberty has found its full expression in the market economy. Equality has given rise to various forms of "the welfare state" founded on the redistribution of wealth.

Many have recognized brotherhood/sisterhood as an important element for a peaceful coexistence of people. For instance we can find explicit mention of brotherhood/sisterhood in article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the spirit of brotherhood/sisterhood still has a long way to go to enter, with equal rights, fully into the framework of modern society.

Unconditional giving could become a regulating principle of economics and of society if we recognized that acting towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood/sisterhood constitutes a necessary basis of society. The Economy of Communion embraces this idea and works concretely to demonstrate the benefits that brotherhood/sisterhood has on an economy and on society contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

A Different Attitude Towards Poverty

The EoC understands poverty in two different ways. With the first type, involuntary poverty, people suffer under conditions of misery usually caused and fomented by the injustice of other human persons. This involuntary poverty consists of indigence and misery due to a lack of the most basic means to sustain a dignified life worthy of human persons. We must work to eliminate this type of poverty with great commitment at all levels (personal and institutional), because it attacks the dignity of the human person, degrades all humanity, and prevents a human person's chance for happiness and fulfillment. Recently, New Humanity has supported various initiatives promoted under the leadership of the United Nations with the objective of fighting against this form of poverty and misery. For instance, we took part in the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, the United Nations Expert Group Meeting in Copenhagen on Social Responsibility in the Private Sector. We participate on the NGO Working Group on Financing for Development and support the Millennium Declaration.

With the second type of poverty, voluntary poverty, people freely choose to live a life of poverty – not of indigence but of a detachment from possessions. Voluntary poverty stems from the awareness that as an individual, all that I am and all that I have has been given to me; likewise, to live voluntary poverty, I must also give or be ready to give, all that I have. Voluntary poverty provides a foundation for the dynamics of reciprocity and prompts us to free ourselves from looking at goods as absolute

possessions. If instead, we remain ready to make them gifts, we become free to love, the only thing that truly has importance.

In this way, the goods themselves become bridges rather than barriers to brotherhood/sisterhood, occasions of community, pathways of reciprocity, and a vehicle for eradicating involuntary poverty. Consequently, while people suffer and endure the involuntary poverty caused by persons or events beyond their control, living in accordance with voluntary poverty requires a free will choice. Therefore, in addition to the measures that directly address involuntary poverty, the economy of communion fights against misery and indigence by proposing a "freely chosen poverty" in accordance with the meaning of poverty found in Christian and other religious traditions. A freely chosen life of poverty enables those who choose it to understand the logic of communion and to experience the greater freedom and profound happiness characteristic of people living in communion with each other.

In summary, the humanism of the economy of communion aims at defeating the misery of indigence, i.e., the poverty that is not chosen but suffered, by inviting people who are not indigent to freely choose a moderate or poor style of life. This life-style choice becomes particularly important in developed societies for those who want to maintain a balance of social and environmental sustainability.

With the conviction that people can transform every interaction both inside and outside of a company into personal one-on-one encounters, the EoC logically alters the attitude towards the poor. Those who participate in the Economy of Communion project understand and consider people living in involuntary poverty as crucial stakeholders who actively contribute towards society and can join in spreading this concept of communion to other persons including those who live in similar circumstances of poverty.

The Economy of Communion offers much more than simply a process for the redistribution of goods and resources. It introduces a new process of production and providing services demonstrating that through the sharing of goods and services, a company generates a tangible output: the experience of communion. A new understanding of poverty emerges from the broad experience of the Economy of Communion. We might even use the term of a new "culture of poverty", where everybody involved would experience a climate of substantial equality between those who give and those who receive, since everyone gives and receives at the same time.

People assisted by the Economy of Communion find themselves on an equal level of human dignity. Many people who have received support from the EoC later have begun sharing spontaneously and voluntarily what they received. It does not come as a big surprise to find persons formerly in need of assistance among today's entrepreneurs of the Economy of Communion working to meet the needs of their brothers and sisters in the human family.

On the other hand, through the choice of voluntary poverty, the entrepreneur himself or herself becomes poor, not indigent, and out of love uses his or her talents to generate resources to be put in communion, even when that requires taking financial risks.

New Humanity's Economy of Communion Project put into practice in the economic field with its principles of brotherhood/sisterhood and of recognizing the inherent desire of each human person to help others in need represents a way that anyone can follow to fight the misery and extreme poverty that exists all over the world and contribute towards the eradication of poverty.

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Statement submitted by Baha'i International Community, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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Statement

Any definition of poverty and course for its elimination is shaped by prevailing notions about the nature and purpose of the development process. The combined efforts of the United Nations and civil society have significantly expanded the understanding of poverty and development. The recognition of the interrelatedness of development, human rights, and human security; the increased awareness of the interactions between the market and the legal, social, cultural and physical environment in which it operates[1]; the acknowledgement of human well-being as the goal of development; efforts to introduce more equity into systems of global trade and finance; and the emphasis on human solidarity as the basis for sustainable development – these have generated a worldwide momentum in the drive to find enduring solutions to the scourge of poverty.

Despite these advances, however, the underlying materialistic assumptions driving poverty eradication efforts remain virtually unchallenged: it is generally accepted that an increase in material resources will eradicate this condition from human life. The Millennium Development Goals, while effective in catalyzing poverty alleviation efforts, have also framed development primarily in terms of the improvement of material conditions.[2] Yet the most persistent ills obstructing the peaceful development of peoples and nations – the marginalization of girls and women, failing states, the lack of political freedoms, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the proliferation of weapons and violent conflict, inter-ethnic and racial tensions, religious intolerance and extremism, lawlessness and growing unemployment – cannot be alleviated by material means alone. These social ills evidence a different kind of poverty – one rooted in the values and attitudes that shape relationships between individuals, communities, and nations as well as between the governors and the governed.

The Bahá'í International Community views the purpose of development as contributing to the foundation for a new social and international order, capable of creating and sustaining conditions in which human beings can advance morally, culturally, and intellectually.[3] This purpose is rooted in the understanding that the transformation of society will involve profound changes in the individual as well as the deliberate and systematic re-creation of social structures. From this perspective, poverty can be defined as the absence of resources – physical, social, and ethical – necessary for the establishment of conditions, which promote the moral, material, and creative capacities of individuals, communities, and institutions. Guided by this definition and the belief in the inherent goodness and essential spiritual nature of every human being, we submit the following recommendations to the United Nations on the occasion of its review of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

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[1] Jeffrey Sachs, "Clinical Economics," *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005).

[2] While the Millennium Development Goals set out to promote gender equality, education, social inclusion and environmental sustainability, they focus primarily on people's material needs, including income poverty, hunger, disease, and provision of shelter.

[3] This is consistent with Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that, "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized."

Overcome the limitations of particularistic mindsets

The eradication of poverty will require a fundamental paradigm shift on the part of nations and individuals. Our particularistic frames of reference – defined by ethnic or religious community, nation, 'North' and 'South,' 'developed' and 'developing,' or regional alliances – must gradually give way to an emerging sense of global solidarity and responsibility. Facilitated by efforts to integrate human rights into development and security frameworks, initiatives to create more just systems of trade and finance, evolving concepts of sovereignty, a growing body of international law, and a dramatic increase in travel and communication technology, such a shift is already well underway. We must now strive to enlarge our notions of responsibility and citizenship until we come to understand the struggles and progress of other peoples and nations as our own. Such a paradigm shift represents a practical response to the recognition that peace and prosperity are indivisible and that no sustainable benefit can be conferred on a nation or community if the welfare of the nations as a whole is ignored or neglected.

Enhance local deliberative and problem-solving capacity

Often the target populations of poverty eradication projects are perceived as masses of undernourished people, overwhelmed by their circumstances and needs rather than capable agents of change in their communities. The challenge for development efforts is to find methods that allow individuals and communities to solve their own problems; the ability of a community to take on more complex social issues is a key indicator of progress. One of the essential skills involved is that of group decision-making – bringing together diverse views, searching for the best solution, and generating commitment and solidarity to carry the decision through.

Implement gender-based budgeting

Many studies confirm that female poverty cannot be conceptualized the same way as male poverty, given that women's social and cultural roles and their relationship to systems of power and authority differ from those of men.[4] These differences, however, are rarely reflected in official poverty statistics and, consequently, do not inform resource allocation at local, national, and regional levels.[5] In order for governments to fulfill their commitments to gender equality, public expenditures must include a gender analysis – involving women in budget decision-making and assessing the impact of fiscal measures on the status of women in the community.

Women hold approximately 15% of elected parliamentary seats globally, the power to legislate and effect change at the national and global levels rests primarily with men. It is equally their responsibility to push for the unconditional ratification of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women by member states and to put in place accountability mechanisms when commitments are not followed through. The

[4] ***Social Watch Report 2005 – Roars and Whispers: Gender and Poverty, Promises vs. Action.***
[URL: http://www.socialwatch.org/en/informeImpreso/informe2005.htm]

[5] **Karen Judd, ed., *Gender Budget Initiatives: Strategies, Concepts, and Experiences* (New York: The United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2002).**

extension of opportunities to women and the emergence of new forms of partnership between men and women have the potential to revolutionize every institution of society from the family to the government – creating the very conditions that make progress and prosperity possible.

Create rural centers of technology training and research

While the adoption of new technologies is integral to development, too often – under the guise of 'modernization' – these have been inappropriate to the culture and community into which they were introduced. Alongside Millennium Development Goals calling for the sharing of information and communication technologies, equally important is the creation of local institutions, such as rural centers of technology training and research, constructively blending modern scientific methods with indigenous practices and thereby directly engaging local populations in the generation and implementation of new ideas. True development consists of the creation of indigenous capacity to participate in the generation of technologies for the benefit of the broader community.

Expand development indicators to assess ethical and moral capacities

The measures and indicators used to assess poverty and human development, such as the Gross National Product and the Human Development Index, largely determine what is valued and, as such, shape development policy and priorities. The progress of communities and nations requires not only material inputs and legal measures to secure order, but the development of moral capabilities to govern behavior and decision-making by individuals and institutions.

In an effort to advance the methods for assessing development at the community level from a moral perspective, the Bahá'í International Community has proposed the following set of principles as a basis for the construction of ethically-based development indicators: unity in diversity (the extent to which all members of a community are integrated into community life); equity and justice (to ensure that opportunity and access to material and social resources are fairly distributed); gender equality; trustworthiness; and freedom of thought, conscience and belief.[6] These principles could be applied in the areas of economic development, education, environmental stewardship, and governance, for example, to generate development goals and construct new indicators to measure progress towards these goals.

Eliminate extremes of wealth

Extremes of poverty are linked to extremes of wealth. Given the interconnectedness of the global economic system, one extreme cannot be abolished while the other is allowed to exist. In this regard, efforts to eradicate poverty must include an earnest re-evaluation of global systems and processes – including governance, trade, and the private transactions –

[6] Bahá'í International Community, ***Valuing Spirituality in Development: Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development***, a concept paper written for the World Faiths Development Dialogue, Lambeth Palace, London (London: The Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1998).

that perpetuate the growing extremes of wealth and poverty. Greater corporate accountability should not be restricted to the environment and labor standards but also take into account the full panoply of human rights. The legitimacy and social benefit of one's material resources depend on the means by which they are acquired and the end to which they are used.

While the Millennium Development Goals have focused the world's development agenda for the next ten years, the United Nations must not limit its attention to this relatively short span of time – which confines it to a primarily reactive mode. Alongside short-term goals, the United Nations, with academia and civil society, needs to consider longer-term scenarios and desired outcomes. Such an orientation would allow it to examine a wider range of policy and programmatic options and to cultivate a diversity of intellectual contributions, thereby enriching the visioning process. Let us not be content with minimum standards, narrow material goals, and compromise positions but rather cast a vision of prosperity that can inspire the masses of humanity to work towards its realization in a deliberate act of global solidarity.

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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)

Statement submitted by International Council of Psychologists, American Psychological Association, Armenian International Women's Association, Associated Country Women of the World, Center for Migration Studies of New York, Child Welfare League of America, Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America, International Association of Applied Psychology, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Council of Psychologists, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Social Workers, International Federation on Ageing, International Kolping Society, International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Science, International Union of Psychological Science, National Council on Family Relations, SOS Kinderdorf International, World Family Organization, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.5/2006/1.

05-64402 (E) 291205

Statement

As the UN moves into its 61st year, we urge the Commission on Social Development to address the persistent plight of families living in extreme poverty. The Commission must promote action on the following goals:

1. Alleviation of hunger through the ongoing guarantee of food and water security.
2. Liveable housing and sanitation.
3. Medical and mental health services for parents and children through local clinics, hospitals, and community facilities with adequate supplies and trained staff.
4. Universal free elementary education for all children and literacy programmes for adults of all ages.
5. Employment opportunities and creation of decent jobs with relevant training.
6. Micro-credit for self-employment and small entrepreneurial ventures, especially for women.
7. Disaster relief and refugee services that encompass family reunification and support.

We state our trust in the Commission on Social Development to fulfil these urgent needs of families and to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

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Statement submitted by International Movement ATD Fourth World, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.5/2006/1.

05-64450 (E) 040106

Statement

Since Heads of State and Government gathered to address profound social problems, particularly poverty eradication, at the Copenhagen Summit for Social Development in 1995, it has been recognized that the voices and thoughts not only of the poor but also of the poorest must be present in the process of social development. The First International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) continued in this spirit by recognizing those living in poverty as partners in social development. And since its first commemoration in 1987, and official recognition by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, October 17th of each year, turns the page to a new history in which all men and women gather to consider and testify to how they contribute to the eradication of extreme poverty.

Although the Copenhagen Summit inspired us to pose the key question of how to assure that the poorest are able to participate in the eradication of poverty, the question still remains: How do we enable the poorest and most excluded people to participate in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of policies and action plans to eradicate extreme poverty?

"It is by taking the poorest as partners and allies that we would know the best chance of advancing in our understanding of the indivisibility of rights and responsibilities, not just in the life of each individual person, but in the existence of humanity. The poorest truly demonstrate that it is not just the individual person, but humanity as a whole, which is indivisible, linked by one and the same destiny".[1]

Encouraged by the 2005 theme of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, "*Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Empowering the poorest of the poor*," we appeal to Governments and States to give greater attention to their methodology of empowerment and participation of all those who live in extreme poverty in poverty eradication strategies. Many experiences of people and NGOs working with those in extreme poverty demonstrate that unless those living in extreme poverty are involved in policy and decision making, in the implementation and evaluation of these policies, and on issues that affect their lives, any poverty reduction program is destined to fail by not reaching the poorest people.

Why have the voices of the poor not been heard?

As recognized in a recent UNDP Development Effectiveness Report, "Governments are under increasing pressure to include NGOs in policy formulation. But a key challenge in promoting civil society engagement is to determine who can represent civil society interests and how to reach them".[2] People who live in conditions of poverty and extreme poverty have a key role to play in reminding us of the very serious violations of their human rights, as they show us the myriad of their daily efforts in defense of human rights and human dignity. Despite this fact, "it is common for the poorest and the

[1] Fr. Joseph Wresinski, founder of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, in an intervention at the Commission on Human Rights in 1987.

[2] UNDP, 2003d, Development Effectiveness Report 2003. Partnership for results. Evaluation Office, New York: UNDP, p. 11.

marginalized groups to get left out of critical fora of public discussion".[3] Whether in a developing country where a large proportion of the population is poor, or in a disadvantaged community in a wealthy country, the usual goal in establishing economic and social development is to invest in projects where the results will be the greatest, most immediate and highly visible in the hopes that these benefits eventually trickle down to others. In reality, the effects of these development projects have not trickled far enough to reach the poorest, who most of the time, are also isolated from those who develop anti-poverty policies and projects. This isolation permits these efforts to continue without considering the voices, experiences, thoughts and ambitions of a crucial and entire group of people.

Why are their voices important?

Mr. Bernard Mourgeon, who at one point lived for several years on the streets in France, explains why.

"In France the exclusion of very poor families is a reality. They find themselves in situations of eviction, heavy indebtedness, unemployment . . . and under the indifferent regard of a society where many live comfortably. To combat poverty you need others. Alone you can do nothing. More and more we work on housing, education, and health in partnership with social and cultural institutions. It is a common venture in which the professionals learn from our life experience. They are astonished at the openness of spirit of persons coming from very precarious lives. These are great moments where different kinds of knowledge meet. They give a lot to families in difficulty and to the others, because the goal is to come out stronger and richer in experience. The authorities need to listen to us so that policies can be created which take account of what we live".[4]

This testimony illustrates the lessons that pain has taught those who experience extreme poverty. We need all of their voices to reverberate strongly, shaping our thinking and our policies.

On the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, people all over the world speak out on behalf of others, their own families and friends, as well as victims of extreme poverty in parts of the world they have never seen. We all need to work from the perspective and with the input of those who need their human rights protected and promoted the most.

Last year's observance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty at the UN Headquarters in New York featured testimonies of extreme poverty from around the world. These testimonies were shared by international delegates as well as others speaking on behalf of those living in extreme poverty within the United States. At the end of the commemoration, these delegates, men and women from France, Haiti, Guatemala, the Philippines, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States of America, most living in extreme poverty, participated in a meeting with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. Speaking to Mr. Annan on 17 October 2005 on

[3] UNDP, 2003d. Already quoted, p. 11.

[4] On October 17, 2005 thirteen delegates, including Mr. Bernard Mourgeon, had a meeting and dialogue with the Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. Kofi Annan, at which he gave this testimony.

behalf of people in the Philippines, Mrs. Tita Villarosa appealed, "Make us your partners as you move forward the agenda on security, development and human rights for all. Let's pool our knowledge together, yours and ours. Let's act now, no longer separately, but together".

As the 1995 World Summit on Social Development sought strategies for poverty eradication and stressed the participation of the poorest and the importance of seeking a fuller knowledge of poverty, the inclusion of the voices of those living in poverty is absolutely required to meet the Millennium Development Goals and other international agreements. Referring to the theme of last year's International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, in his message for that day Mr. Annan reiterated the necessity of this true partnership: "The theme underscores the fact that poverty can be reduced only if we reach out to the poorest of the poor, including those often excluded from the development process. Only through partnerships with them, and by taking steps to tackle inequality, can we eradicate poverty in all its dimensions".

We understand that participation requires bridging differences of cultural diversity as well as mutual comprehension between persons of different social backgrounds. It requires outreach to and understanding the interests of various parties and changes in the dominant economic and social paradigm. To succeed in meeting the ultimate goals, those living in conditions of poverty should be invited and welcomed to the tables of planning, decision-making and implementation strategies in ways that we are prepared to partner with them.

Recommendations

There should be systemic and institutional changes that enable people living in extreme poverty to have a stronger voice in the implementation and evaluation of poverty eradication strategies. To move towards these desired changes, we make the following recommendations with the aim of refocusing the fight against extreme poverty on a partnership with the poorest:[5]

- Evaluate the actions for the eradication of poverty within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the most disadvantaged populations. By adopting the Millennium Declaration, the General Assembly of the United Nations affirmed that its ultimate goal is to eradicate extreme poverty. The MDGs are a step toward that objective. The most disadvantaged populations are partly invisible in the statistics used to evaluate the MDGs; this is especially true for those used by the World Bank. The reasons for this have already been analyzed and recognized by the United Nations. In addition, the present methods for evaluating the MDGs hide the growing disparities within disadvantaged populations. The UN could support an approach to evaluating the MDG process in which the most disadvantaged populations are present as actors.

[5] On October 17th, 2005 thirteen delegates met and dialogued with the Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. Kofi Annan. These recommendations were part of the proposals made to Mr. Annan at that meeting.

The procedures of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the resulting programs must include a partnership with the poorest. This is necessary in order to assure that the definition and application of the programs be efficacious and empower the people most affected. For this partnership to be fruitful, it is necessary to reflect on the terms of the partnership with the most disadvantaged and to consult with the NGOs working with the poorest. This approach will contribute to accelerating progress toward the fulfillment of the MDGs.

Research new ways of establishing or reinforcing collaborations which allow the poorest and those engaged with them over the long term to be recognized as sources and creators of knowledge. An example would be the development, with international financial institutions, of national strategies for the fight against poverty.

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Statement submitted by International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Pax Christi International and UNANIMA International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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* E/CN.5/2006/1.

05-64499 (E) 040106

Statement

The relationship of poverty and HIV/AIDS

In 2001, the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS stated that poverty, underdevelopment and illiteracy are among the principal contributing factors to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Little has changed in the last years. This statement continues to be validated many times over, particularly in those regions of the world with high rates of incidence.

In our work in the field we have seen the double-edged sword of poverty in the face of the pandemic. Persons living in poverty are demonstrably more vulnerable to the disease. At the same time, HIV/AIDS impoverishes societies, families and individuals and contributes to the weakening of nation states. The impact of the disease on economic and social life is well known: a dramatic decrease in life expectancy, loss of productive workers, health care professionals and teachers, decrease in per capita income, large numbers of impoverished elderly and orphans isolated and stigmatized, a society unable to assist them because of its limited resources. Widows from AIDS are particularly vulnerable. Together with their children, in many parts of the world they are not only deprived of material means but also of their civil and human rights due to traditions.

The impact on children – those called by UNICEF the "missing face of HIV/AIDS – has particularly dire effects: the loss of childhood for those who become full-time care-givers in the family and even prematurely heads of households, the lack of normal socialization and formation in life-skills, the cutting short or even deprivation of any formal schooling. In this regard, we point particularly to the situation of girl-children.

Recent statistics show that HIV infection rates are disproportionately higher in girls than in boys. Girls are more often the targets of violence and sexual exploitation in situations of conflict and in the home. In many countries, they are largely excluded from access to education that could assist them in protecting themselves. In addition, cultural norms and legal structures often leave them defenseless even when they know how to protect themselves.

We know that when the situations which allow such poverty are not addressed, poverty is often reproduced in subsequent generations.

Also well-known is the increased vulnerability to the disease of people living in poverty. Lack of education, nutrition, and decision-making ability has made women and children the most likely to incur new infections and unable to cope with the disease when it occurs. We have also seen that poverty motivates some to behave in ways which increase their risk of becoming infected as migrants, refugees or trafficked persons are often exploited sexually.[1]

[1] In *The Macroeconomics of HIV/AIDS*, ed. by Markus Haacker, (International Monetary Fund:2004), the details of the links between poverty and HIV/AIDS are well developed.

In these arguments we affirm that the pandemic is not only a health issue but affects all aspects of the social, economic and political life of the local communities and countries with high incidence of persons infected. Only by tracking the increased impoverishment that occurs because of AIDS in a holistic manner can the effective practices be identified and emulated.

At a time when increased terrorism has shifted the priorities of many states from development to military security, we reaffirm the statement of the Secretary-General in his report *In Larger Freedom*, "Not only are development, security and human rights all imperative, they reinforce each other." With this in mind, it is of ever greater importance that we make every effort to leverage this linkage by making a key element of our fight against the pandemic, a more determined effort to eliminate poverty particularly among peoples severely affected by AIDS.

We do know that the fight against AIDS is now globalized. Many resources have become available, yet those working directly with persons living with AIDS tell us they don't know where these funds are and how to access them. We also know that many countries with high incidence of AIDS have developed specific targets and indicators to fight the disease. For this reason, we are disappointed that the final outcome document of the September 2005 Summit did not contain such specificity although earlier versions of the document did.

Recommendations:

We recommend:

1. That, in order to increase the information about available resources and access to them, each entity that receives funding publish widely and transparently how much is available and how it can be accessed. Evidence indicates that in regions where this has been done, more of the resources actually reach a greater number of the persons for whom they are intended.

2. That Governments develop viable small neighborhood forums and network these structures to national and international networks to ensure the active and universal participation of children and youth in decision-making especially related to HIV/AIDS so that they develop the knowledge, skills and values necessary to become active agents of social change in their own communities.

3. That the commitments made in par. 57 of the Outcome Document of the High Level Summit of September 2005 be developed with specific, time-bound targets for all member states prior to the June 2006 UNGASS meeting on HIV/AIDS.

4. That a multi-sectoral approach be used to monitor the commitments made in the 2001 Declaration. Civil society, NGOs, including faith-based groups should be included in monitoring on all levels, especially the local level.

5. That efforts to reduce poverty among the most vulnerable populations affected by HIV/AIDS be scaled up significantly, particularly among the elderly, children orphaned because of the disease, widows, the indigenous, and girls and women at risk of being sexually exploited.

6. That the cycle of poverty for girls and women be broken by empowering the girl-child to develop her full potential through education and by the implementation of changes in the social, cultural, legal, political and economic systems that will free her from oppression and exploitation.

7. That attention be given to the education of all children and youth. In the case of boys, in particular, education should help make them more responsible and aware of the disease and of the consequences of their actions and aim to change those attitudes and beliefs (machismo, male control of family property, male control and ownership of family members) that have led to the systemic oppression, in most societies, of women and girls.

8. That in all countries culturally sensitive education for all stages of life be implemented to assist in HIV/AIDS prevention.

9. That paragraph 57 (d) of the World Summit 2005 Outcome Document (see General Assembly resolution 60/1), which states that countries commit to "enhanced access to affordable medicines", be implemented by encouraging them to use the section of the Doha Declaration which permits countries to declare a health emergency to make use of compulsory licensing or parallel imports for generic medicines, in order to prevent early death due to AIDS.

Note: The statement is supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Dominican Leadership Conference, International Association of Charities, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, Rotary International, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, Soroptimist International and ZENAB for Women in Development.

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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

Statement submitted by International Association of Gerontology, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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* E/CN.5/2006/1.

05-64523 (E) 040106

Statement

Never before in the history of mankind have so many people lived so long. This unprecedented achievement is transforming all sectors and institutions of societies worldwide. It is no longer possible to ignore global ageing regardless of whether one views it positively or negatively.

In the next fifty years, the number of older persons will nearly quadruple, growing from about 600 million to almost two billion people. Today, one in every ten persons is 60 years or older. By 2050, one out of every five will be an older person.

The importance and acceptance of this reality was pointed out at the 2003 International Day of Older Persons by the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs warning that: "The inclusion of all, and we stress all, population groups is the key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)..." This view was echoed at the same event by the Poverty Group of the UN Development Programme: "The elderly play a crucial role for achieving the MDGs... The elderly will influence, in a very major way, the outcome of the MDGs by 2015...if we are going to ignore the well-being of the elderly, we will do so at the peril of the MDGs..."

It is critical, therefore, that the profound demographic changes occurring worldwide be given recognition as an essential component of development in general and the achievement of the MDGs, specifically that of poverty reduction. At this time, the MDGs have specific targets for reducing poverty among children and youth; they are silent on the issue of older persons, a group that "that makes up an increasing proportion of the poor in developing countries and countries in transition," as the Economic Commission for Europe noted in 2005, "where older persons are among the poorest and most vulnerable groups."

However, ensuring the participation of older persons in the development process goes beyond poverty reduction. Given the dramatic increase in the numbers of older persons, their involvement in the process itself is crucial. Speaking at the 2003 observance of the UN International Day of Older Persons, the President of the General Assembly said: "It is difficult to imagine how countries may progress if such a significant proportion of the population is not taken into account in the development process." In his remarks at the 2004 International Day of Older Persons, Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared, "The Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid two years ago, marked a turning point in our thinking. The Assembly recognized ageing as a global phenomenon and supported its inclusion in the international development agenda..."

At the 43rd Session of the Commission for Social Development (14 Feb. 2005), the European Union stated: "The potential for older persons is a powerful basis for future development – enabling society to rely increasingly on the skills, experiences and wisdom of older persons not only to take the lead in their own betterment but also to participate actively in that of society as a whole."

Given the fact that policy makers frequently highlight the necessity of including older persons both as recipients of MDG achievements and as participants in the development process, what impedes action? "Situations of inequality have remained pervasive...and have had direct negative impacts on

disadvantaged and vulnerable sectors and specific groups such as youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and displaced persons" declared the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs at the 43rd Session of the Commission for Social Development. The Report of the UN Second World Assembly on Ageing points out: "A society for all ages encompasses the goal of providing older persons with the opportunity to continue contributing to society. To work towards this goal, it is necessary to remove whatever excludes or discriminates against them..."

Ultimately it is governments that must act on the commitments made at international conferences to ensure that all their people benefit from development. This was affirmed by the 166 member states attending the Second World Assembly on Ageing in their Political Declaration which acknowledged the role of older persons in future development; recognized the importance of placing ageing in development agendas as well as in strategies for the eradication of poverty and in seeking to achieve full participation in the global economies of all developing countries; and, most importantly, recognized that governments have the primary responsibility for providing leadership on ageing matters.

In closing, the NGO Committee on Ageing stands ready to work with governments and the United Nations community in realizing the commitments made to global ageing populations and ensuring their inclusion in the international development agenda.

Note: Statement endorsed and supported by the Non-Governmental Organization Committee on Ageing.

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Statement submitted by Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries and Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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05-64511 (E) 040106

Statement

On Poverty Eradication and Trade

Eradication of extreme poverty, which is the first of the Millennium Development goals, is possible – if developing countries' commitment to good governance is matched by a commitment from partners in the developed countries and international financial institutions to increased development assistance (and foreign direct investment). Overall reduction of poverty calls for a multidimensional approach to Poverty Eradication. Though the last Decade was earmarked to eradicate poverty, what is seen on the ground today, is most developing countries in a quagmire of debt and impoverishment. This is disturbing given the fact that in spite of all the advancement in technologies, millions (1/3 of the world's people) live below the poverty line - on less than a dollar a day.

Many factors contribute to keeping people in poverty. Nations need be serious about eradicating poverty. Trade is an important area for poverty eradication. Trade barriers among developed nations continue to cause havoc for many developing nations. These barriers continue to keep people in poverty. This needs to be addressed without further delay if this essential goal of poverty eradication is to be achieved.

Trade liberalization can increase poverty in low-income countries if not handled carefully. Developing countries should not be forced to follow developed-country agendas. A 1% increase in the developing countries' share of the world exports would lift 128 million people out of poverty. However, the current global trading system discriminates against developing countries and hinders poor country participation in the global economy. The two biggest problems are agricultural policies in rich countries – huge subsides and the access of poor countries to international markets – unfair market tariffs. For years the developing countries of the south have been pleading that the issue of agricultural subsidies be addressed as only a little has been done in this area by rich countries. Even a slight reduction in the total amount of agricultural subsidies in the developed countries would go a long way in bringing millions out of poverty. Tariffs and domestic subsidies of industrialized nations have serious consequences for poor farmers around the globe. Subsidies by rich nations foster over-production and thus lead to dumping food on local markets at prices below production. This creates unfair competition for local farmers in poor countries, who are then unable to sell at fair prices even in their own markets.

Developing countries must have the right to implement trade polices, including tariffs and other import barriers, which promote and protect local agriculture, rural livelihoods, and food–security. Proposals repeatedly put forward by developing countries are not being taken seriously in the trade negotiations.

Increased aid must be complemented by trade reform. For developing countries to boost economic growth through trade, the main barriers to their exports need to be removed. Tariffs imposed by wealthy countries especially in agriculture and manufactured goods, must be lowered or eliminated. The $350 billion in subsidies and other support that developed countries provide each year to their domestic agricultural producers must be cut. These distort markets

and reduce the potential export earnings of 70 per cent of the world's poorest people who live in rural areas and rely on farming to survive.

Fair trade, even more than aid, is necessary in fostering more equitable international trade and development. There is a direct link between human rights, trade and development policy of national as well as the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF and regional development institutions, the corporate sector and development practitioners.

Levels of Official Development Assistance though promised 35 years ago to reach 0.7% of GDP, which would have enabled people to stand on their own feet has never been reached and been on the decline. Certain regions, especially in Africa will not be able to help themselves if initial aid is not provided. Talk of poverty eradication needs to be followed by increase in ODA. Development aid and private charitable donations are the main source of external financing for many of poorest countries.

While official development assistance reached $79 billion in 2004 much more is needed. On the average, aid remains at 25 cents out of every $100 of the donor countries' national income. Aid should not be tied to trade; delinking the two is crucial for poverty eradication.
The greater part of the population of low-income countries engages in agriculture for a living. For those countries working on eradication of poverty it is essential that they resort to labor-intensive mechanisms whereby more people are employed. The global trading system can contribute to employment growth by facilitating the flow of export of goods. The global trading system needs to be fair. There need to be safety nets for the poor, so that they do not fall between the cracks in the trading system. Removing basic food staples from trade agreements altogether would be more helpful and go a long way in reducing poverty.

Liberalization: Individual countries should be free to decide which sector they themselves want to liberalize and not be dictated to from outside. Developing countries should not be forced to privatize their essential services like water, health care and education.

If a country needs to address the poverty issues, it is important that the country be free to set its own development priorities and not be dictated by International Financial Institutions. Conditionalties imposed on developing countries by International Financial Institutions through liberalization policies have exposed workers in formerly protected industries to unemployment and poverty.

International Financial System and Development:
The issue of reform of global economic governance to strengthen the voice and participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making and norm-setting is of critical importance. One key factor for poverty eradication is the active participation of developing countries, particularly small developing countries, in decision-making process of international economic, trade and financial institutions, including the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization.

The review of the Decade for the Eradication of Poverty ought to be used well to creatively come up with viable solutions to the problems that nations and peoples have not addressed effectively the past ten years.

Recommendations

- Developed countries need to set firm and monitorable time-line for the elimination of export and trade distorting subsidies.
- Developing countries should be allowed to use safeguard mechanisms to protect food security, rural livelihoods and development for poverty reduction.
- Set human rights approach and commitment to ensure more equitable trade and development policies.
- Develop recommendations for policy makers and trade development experts on issues such as health, equity, agricultural subsidies and rights based approaches for reform of multilateral institutions.
- Calls for the implementation of MDG 8, for an open trading and financial system, and more generous aid for poverty reduction. With political will a global deal on Aid, Trade and Debt Relief is possible. This would call for cooperation with the private sector to address youth unemployment, ensure access to affordable, essential drugs.

Note: Statement endorsed and supported by Anglican Consultative Council, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Congregations of St. Joseph, Dominican Leadership Conference, Grail, Loretto Community, Temple of Understanding and UNANIMA International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

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Statement submitted by the Foundation for the Rights of the Family, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* * *

* E/CN.5/2006/1.

05-64535 (E) 040106

THE FAMILY AND POVERTY

In 1989, the "Report of the World Social situation" of this Commission for Social Development, at its thirty-first session in Vienna, said "As families are important producers of food in Africa, the temporary breakdown of the family threatens the survival of individuals and the economic viabilities of communities and countries".

The vast distance between the dehumanizing situation of poverty and a remote administration system calls for intervening agencies; and there is no more effective go-between than the family, the safety net where the basic needs are met, even in situation of crisis: poverty, unemployment, delinquency, drug addiction, HIV/AIDS. Children, youth, the disabled and elderly members all benefit from a readily available network parallel to the State.

Population policies, family policies and family well-being are closely related to economic development and to raising the income level and the quality of life of the poor.

Greater attention should be focused on the family and on promoting awareness of the contribution to social development and social progress made by families the world over. A family dimension should be incorporated into all policies and programmes of action concerned with sustainable development. This family dimension should also be implicit in all documents related to poverty.

All over the world, families are as different as they are alike. The family is essential to the world's future, it is the cradle of the generations to come. Everywhere, its strength and weakness reflect the fabric of larger society. As the world's human relationship, the family has survived thousand of years, adapting to changing socio-economic conditions and the progress of humanity.

However, poverty, unemployment, urbanization, migration and forced shifts of populations have placed greater strains on the family. Parents are more likely than before to require assistance from third parties to reconcile work and family responsibilities. Despite their resiliency and strengths, families everywhere are under pressure and in need of support.

A DECLARATION ON THE FAMILY

Societies worldwide recognize that the family has a number of social functions and responsibilities. In fact, the family, historically and by definition, can be considered as the first private sector, with its adhering share of responsibilities, which, in turn, have their counterpart in certain rights.

The International Conference on Population (Cairo 1994) implicitly recognizes the rights of the family, alongside its functions, in Chapter V of its Programme of Action entitled "The family, its roles, rights, composition and structures".

The Foundation for the Rights of the Family feels that a declaration on family responsibilities, functions and rights would be an adequate follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

The explicit articulation of the rights, functions and responsibilities of families can be a source of inspiration and a point of reference to supports families and create family-friendly societies.

We, therefore, suggest that an open-ended working group be created within the Commission for Social Development to review and extract relevant provisions on the family from national laws, international instruments and existing draft declarations.

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Statement submitted by VIVAT International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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05-64559 (E) 040106

Statement

In December 1995, the General Assembly proclaimed the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006). In December 1996, the General Assembly declared that the theme for the Decade as a whole would be that eradicating poverty was an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind.

The Millennium Development Goals, carved out of the many resolutions and commitments made at earlier Conferences, Summits, and Special Sessions of the General Assembly, were broadly aimed at reducing poverty all over the world.

In spite of all the efforts and commitments of the International community, the Government Agencies, and the NGOs poverty in its many faces continues to remain the main problem all over the globe. Least Developed Countries in Africa continue to have the highest proportion of people living in extreme poverty. Women and children remain the most vulnerable to the effects of war, disease, illiteracy, lack of access to credit or job opportunities and often end up in being victims of human trafficking.

The Report of the Secretary General (A/60/314) entitled "The centrality of employment to poverty eradication" submitted to the Sixtieth session of the General Assembly argues that employment is the missing link in the growth and poverty reduction equation.

In this context, it is heartening to note that the 44th Session of the Commission for Social Development has taken the priority theme as: Review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006).

VIVAT International (VIVAT) has attempted to focus on people-centered development by empowerment and capacity building programs, especially for women and indigenous people. VIVAT assists the poor and the marginalized, especially women and youth, to overcome poverty by creating job opportunities through Microcredit and Technology. VIVAT strives to empower the victims of human trafficking and persons infected and/or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Some Success Stories of VIVAT Members in Reducing Poverty

1. **'AKAP International'**, Benguet, Philippines in collaboration with the local government and other agencies, has given various trainings, including social development and livelihood trainings to 28 Cooperatives of vegetable farmers (indigenous population), which has created 3000 job opportunities for the farmers in Benguet. The Farmers have significantly increased their annual income by federating themselves and marketing their produce directly. This enabled them to raise their standard of living and to provide for their children nutritious food and quality education.

2. **The Sandiwaan Center for Learning's** e-Learning Project at Smokey Mountain, Santa Mesa, Manila, is a creative step to help out-of-school youths in partnership with the Department of Education's Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems towards passing an equivalency test for their

high school diploma. According to Polytechnic University of the Philippines, 73% of the students of e-learning have got jobs.

3. In 'Droga', Nysa in Poland, in collaboration with local authorities, VIVAT members are helping the children and unemployed youth affected by poverty, drug abuse, homelessness, and broken homes. These issues are addressed by providing education and employment opportunities and leadership trainings.

4. VIVAT members in Sao Paulo, Palmoplis, Vale do Jequetinhonh, Minas Gerais and Aparecida do Rio Negro in Brazil are striving to promote human life of those excluded by the society, namely, the street people, unemployed, victims of human trafficking and those living in extreme poverty. VIVAT members endeavor to reintegrate these people into the mainstream by offering technical and educational facilities and assist them to find alternatives to the situation in which they find themselves.

Recommendations

As armed conflict in many African and other countries are the main cause of slow development and poverty, we urge the United Nations and the international community to take steps to stop the armed conflicts and prevent the sale of arms to these countries.

The Doha round has to be put into effect by allowing a significant share in the world trade to the African countries. The countries of the North need to open their markets to the products of African countries such as coffee, cotton, palm oil etc., and thus allow them to join the globalized economy. The international community must support African efforts to increase agricultural productivity.

VIVAT Members appeal to the governments of developing countries to deliver on the promise to create more jobs, address the health needs of the people and lower the price of medicine.

The local governments need to address the problem of poverty by providing more educational facilities for children, especially girls, and job opportunities to the youth and women, in collaboration with NGOs, as we believe that education and dignified work alternatives to eradicate poverty are long-term goals on the ground.

VIVAT truly believes that if the Governments have the political will, most poor people will be able to rise above the poverty line. The key to the success is education for all and job opportunities to the marginalized. Transparency and accountability from the part of the Government in regard to the execution of pro-poor programs and the collaboration of the Government and the Civil Society will go a long way in empowering the poor and making them self reliant.

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Statement submitted by Congregations of St. Joseph, Dominican Leadership Conference, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and UNANIMA International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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Statement

Wealth creation, sustainable national economies, poverty eradication: what are the connections?

Looking back to the General Assembly resolution calling for the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (A/RES/51/178), we affirm that

> within the context of overall action for the eradication of poverty, special attention should be given to the multidimensional nature of poverty and to the national and international framework conditions and policies that are conducive to its eradication, which should aim at the social and economic integration of people living in poverty and the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including the right to development.

We recognize that, after ten years since this declaration, after five years with the millennium development goal to eradicate poverty operating with no change in the globalized systems for wealth creation, there is, if anything greater poverty and inequality. In the 2005 Human Development Report, statistics show that the richest 10% get 54% of the global income (an increase in 2 percentage points over two decades) while 40% receive only the 5%. Alternatively, using consumption as a measure, the wealthiest 20% of the population of the highest-income countries account for 86% of total private consumption expenditures, while the poorest 20% worldwide account for just 1.3%. Actually only 15% of the world population get most of the benefits of a global economy. This inequality applies between countries as well as within countries. [1]

Without significant systemic changes in the current economic system of wealth creation at all levels, poverty cannot be eradicated for the large percentage of the world's people who suffer trying to survive on less than $1 or $2 daily. To be effective, the changes initiated and implemented must ensure sustainable national economies in all nations be they developing or developed.

Some basic principles:

1. Eradication of poverty is imperative on all levels: economically, politically, ethically. The grinding poverty that characterizes the lives of more than half the world's population and more than 75% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Central Asia[2] threatens security, threatens the state of world health, as well as violating the human rights of those living on less than $2 per day.

2. Re-assessment of economic growth — Economic growth is not in and of itself a good. When economic growth brings with it such harms to people as indicated by a rise in the rates of inequality and increased vulnerability for the most vulnerable it cannot be considered good. When growth in

[1] *The Inequality Predicament Report on the World Social Situation 2005*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, A/60/117/Rev.1, ST/ESA/299.

[2] Based on data from the World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2005*.

productivity and consumption produces unsustainable depletion of the world's resources and harm to the ecosystem, it cannot be considered good.

> If the consumption practices of the several hundred million affluent people in the world today were duplicated by even half of the projected global population of almost 9 billion in 2050, the impact of land, water, energy and other natural resources would be devastating.[3]

3. Use of inclusive processes and decision-making practices for wealth creation. By this we mean not only inclusive of the public and private sector elite who are stakeholders, but, most importantly, inclusive of those who rights are daily violated because of current structures of wealth creation: those who need food, water, energy, housing. In this way, decisions about whether to privatize services which affect basic human rights, like water, education, health will be made with the voice and vote of those most affected by the results of those decisions.

4. Redefinition of risk mitigation as an incentive for action to mean offsetting risks for those who are poorest rather than offsetting risks for companies desiring to profit from entry into a particular market.

5. With regard to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, all countries should be held to similar standards. Hence, MDG 8 ought to be concretized in the same way as the other 7 goals and with the same ongoing measurement and pressure on wealthy countries to fulfill their commitments as there is on those who have not met the other 7 goals. Further in establishing these partnerships for development, it is critical that the parties come as equals to the table, so that conditionalities placed on these partnerships do not benefit only the richer and more powerful.

Recommendations:

1. Initiate steps to evaluate proposed strategies of wealth creation for economic growth with their effects on the human rights of those who are most vulnerable in society.

2. Immediate steps should be taken to develop specific time-bound targets and indicators for MDG Goal 8 which address imbalances in international structures. All stakeholders should be involved equally in their development.

3. In utilizing specific strategies for wealth creation, use as major criteria the values underpinning human development, especially the human rights framework.

4. Greater participation of poor people and countries should be facilitated within the structures of global economic governance.

> -The composition of the boards of the World Bank and IMF should be altered, voting power rebalanced and made truly democratic, formal voting put in place, and the leaders of the organizations selected through open and transparent merit-based processes; Specifically, we recommend the addition of at least two members for Africa and giving greater importance to Asia in decision-making.

[3] Ibid., p. 85.

- Transparency should be enhanced by making the transcripts, minutes and important documents of board meetings available to the public;

5. All aid should be untied, and directed towards areas identified as national priorities for poverty eradication by host governments.

6. Criteria should be developed and implemented to promote the sustainability of national economies in determining appropriate strategies for wealth creation in all nations. These criteria should be both qualitative and quantitative and may involve implementation of changes in consumption and production patterns particularly in the wealthier countries.

Note

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05-64382 (E) 050106

Statement

Educate to eradicate poverty

This year marks the end of the first United Nations Decade on the Eradication of Poverty. It is fitting, therefore, that the 44th Session of the Commission for Social Development take time to evaluate progress that has been made in ending this scourge that afflicts so many and to renew the global commitment to put an end to the poverty that divides and threatens the international community.

In the course of these past ten years numerous international meetings have repeatedly taken up the social development mandate to eradicate poverty, promote social integration and create full employment. Yet despite the promises made in the Millennium Declaration, the Dakar Framework for Action, the Monterrey Consensus, the 10-year review of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme for Action and repeated yet again in the just completed 2005 World Summit, poverty and inequality continue to plague the world's people. Despite notable progress in some areas and regions of the world, the gap between those who have little and those who have much continues to widen and the plethora of promises made in the past decade remain largely unfulfilled.

Clearly the conquest of poverty and the achievement of social development for all is a complex undertaking. It must necessarily include a variety of strategies and policies aimed at ensuring social justice and a world in larger freedom. Education for all must surely be part of any policy mix. As the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document noted, both formal and non-formal education play a critical role in the achievement of poverty eradication and all of the other development goals envisaged in the Millennium Declaration.[1]

Education is vital to poverty eradication, social integration and full employment, and essential to the achievement of a more just and equitable global society. The education of girls is a particularly important and efficacious component of successful human development efforts.

Progress has been too slow

While progress has been made over the past decade in getting more children into school, the pace remains far too slow. If current trends continue the world net enrollment ratio may reach 87% by 2015—fully 13% points short of the goal of education for all. Furthermore, the poor quality of some education, resulting from irrelevant and obsolete curricula, overcrowded classrooms, untrained teachers and gender discrimination, cause high dropout and repetition rates—especially among girls.[2]

While many countries have made significant progress toward gender parity in education, girls still account for 57% of the out-of-school children worldwide. Of eighty-three developing nations for which data are available, only half have achieved gender parity at the primary level, less than one-fifth have attained gender parity at the secondary level and only four at the tertiary level.[3]

[1] *2005 World Summit Outcome*, A/60/L.120, September 2005, paragraph 43.
[2] UNESCO, http://portal.unesco.org/education/en
[3] EFA Global Monitoring, 1.

The world has already missed the first—and perhaps the most critical of all the Millennium Development Targets—gender parity in primary and secondary education. Unless immediate action is taken, this unacceptably slow progress will continue to be measured in the unnecessary deaths of millions of people, the loss of billions of dollars of income and the postponement, perhaps by decades, of the achievement of the other Millennium Development Goals.[4] When girls are left behind the enormous social and economic benefits of girls' education are lost to the entire community.

Girls' education matters

The Secretary-General has clearly identified girls' education as an urgent social development priority.

> If we are to succeed in our efforts to build a healthier, more peaceful and equitable world, classrooms must be full of girls as well as boys. By educating girls, we will help raise economic productivity and reduce both maternal and infant mortality. By educating girls, we will improve nutrition, promote health, and fight HIV/AIDS. By educating girls, we will trigger a transformation of society as a whole—social, economic and political.[5]

While education for both boys and girls leads to increased income for individuals and for nations, the education of girls leads to greater gains. Educated women have smaller, healthier and better educated families. Educated girls are less likely to fall victim to HIV/AIDS, trafficking and other forms of violence. Increased education is one of the most important tools to empower women within the family and society and, as that happens, women not only increase their own agency but improve the well-being of their families and help to transform their communities. [6]

Quality education for all

However, simply providing access to education is not sufficient. Schooling must always provide meaningful, quality education which enables the full development of the human person. It must promote understanding, tolerance and respect for human rights as well as the development of the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for all persons to participate effectively in society.

While no single model is appropriate for all, and education must always fit carefully into local and national contexts, research has uncovered a common set of elements which help to ensure quality education. These include:

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[4] *Girls Can't Wait: Why Girls' Education Matters, and How to Make it Happen* (Brussels, Belgium: Global Campaign for Education, 2005), 1.

[5] Secretary-General's video message for Conference on Gender Parity in Education-Washington, D.C., 2 March 2005.

[6] Barbara Herz and Gene B. Sperling, What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence and Policies from the Developing World, Executive Summary (NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004), 3-6.

- Teachers, with proper and continuous training, who encourage active, participatory learning by students;[7]
- Curriculum and materials relevant to national and local needs, grounded in students' own culture and context and free of bias and stereotypes;
- Local control of education in which parents, and other citizens, are given an explicit role in holding schools and teachers accountable for delivering results;[8]
- Flexible instruction modes, including alternative delivery formats, classroom hours, and content, so as to meet the needs of out-of-school children, particularly girls, and their families;[9]
- Transparent school management that is accountable to stakeholders and constituents, and capable of monitoring and evaluating school performance;[10]
- Dependable educational funding that ensures at least a minimum of education infrastructure, materials, and personnel.[11]

Recommendations:

Rapid progress can be made toward achieving quality education for all which will help to eliminate poverty and establish equity. Civil society actors and NGOs can partner with governments and intergovernmental organizations to:

1. Build the political will necessary to:
   a. Create a national and international ethos which clearly identifies the importance and value of educating girls as well as boys;
   b. Make the education of girls a priority recognizing the key role it plays in eradicating poverty, promoting social integration, creating full employment and accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals.

2. Develop comprehensive national strategies which:
   a. Include education as an essential component in all development plans and poverty reduction strategies;
   b. Encourage hard-to-reach children to attend school by emphasizing quality, removing all school fees, introducing conditional cash transfers and school feeding programs and taking actions to make education girl-friendly, such as increasing the number of female teachers, providing adequate sanitary facilities, eliminating gender bias from the curriculum and pedagogy.[12]

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[7] *Teach to Child Transform A Nation* (Washington, DC: The Basic Education Coalition, 2004), 3.

[8] The UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, *Toward Universal Primary Education: Investments, Incentives, and Institutions* (NY: UN Millennium Project, 2005), 77.

[9] *Teach to Child Transform A Nation* (Washington, DC: The Basic Education Coalition, 2004), 3.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] *State of the World's Children 2004: Girls, Education and Development* (NY: UNICEF, 2003), 84.

3. Mobilize national and international resources for education.
   a. Developing nations should increase national funding for basic education to at least 3% of Gross Domestic Product.[13]
   b. Member nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development should demonstrate their political and financial commitment to "Education for All," as well as, the "United Nation's Girls Education Initiative" and the World Bank's "Fast Track Initiative" by canceling the unpayable debt of poor countries and increasing donor aid for basic education to at least US$7 billion per year.[14]

Conclusions

With more than 100 million children out of school, things can not simply continue along the present course. Eliminating poverty and keeping the pledge of quality education for all comes down to a single question. Is there the political will necessary to keep the promises made to our children?[15]

Governments are responsible for achieving, or enabling the achievement of, the goals and targets that have been set for education. Non-Governmental Organizations have long been a force in promoting and delivering education, especially to those most marginalized and neglected. They must continue to work with governments, local communities and UN agencies to build educational capacity. Finally, all people must continue to work to mobilize the necessary political will and to hold civil society actors, governments and international agencies accountable for commitments made and resources pledged.[15]

Note:
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[13] *Girls Can't Wait*, 4.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Civicus, http://www.civicus.org/mdg/2-3.htm

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Statement

"Progress in eradicating poverty has been mixed. In many countries, the number of people living in poverty has increased since 1995. In many developing countries, social service provision has deteriorated, leaving many without access to basic social services ..." (see General Assembly resolution S-24/2, annex, sect. II, para. 10).

"We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and deshumanizing conditions of extreme poverty to which more than a billion of them are currently subject" (see General Assembly resolution 55/2, sect. III, para. 11).

In Resolution A/RES/50/107 of January 1996, the General Assembly referred to the Observance of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, and proclaimed the first United Nations decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006).

In December 1996, the General Assembly declared the theme for the Decade, as a whole, to be "Eradicating poverty is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind" (General Assembly resolution 51/178).

Looking as far back as August 1974, the Bucharest World Population Conference regretted the fact that a considerable portion of the world population was living in regions of precarious food supply, that millions of its inhabitants were undernourished and that millions were faced with possible starvation (Report of the United Nations World Population Conference –19-30 August 1974 E/conf. 60/19).

In 1995, the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 6-12 March 1995) stated, in chapter 2 of its Programme of Action, that "over one billion people in the world live under unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in developing countries and particularly in rural areas of low-income Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the least developed countries".

Unfortunately, conditions today have not altered significantly, and there is still persistent widespread poverty in many countries of the world.

When considering the reduction and elimination of extended poverty, attention should be given to the fact that the social and economic phenomenon of poverty is particularly complex and dramatic in its effects on the families, which should be empowered by having their capacities and self-help potentials increased.

Throughout the world, war, poverty, natural disasters and economic crises are tearing families apart.

Although in many cases the family can provide a buffer against short-term poverty due to such causes as unemployment, illness and declining capacities of ageing members, long-term

poverty threatens the ability of families to meet the needs of their members and, ultimately, uproots entire families and causes the major dislocation of populations.

Poverty strikes more directly women with insufficient income who are living alone, women who lack resources to feed their family or women who are in charge of a sick or disabled member.

But in spite of strains and adversity, the family has proved resilient and a source of strength and inspiration for their members. Governments could do more to help families to adapt and thrive, so that they can fulfil their social, cultural, and economic roles. For the issue of the family not only involves individual families and their members but has a bearing on social cohesion and stability.

At the same time, family situations continue to change and diversify. Consequently, policies should be reviewed in an effort to keep abreast of changing family circumstances and a more comprehensive approach be taken to harmonize actions on behalf of families.

Families are main agents of sustainable development. Such development depends largely on the social, emotional, cultural and political maturity of all family members.

Recognition of the role families play in social development demands a comprehensive approach to issues such as the distribution of global resources, the eradication of poverty and assuring education and health for all in the context of a concept of human security.

Resolution S-24/2 of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly – quoted at the beginning of this document - recognizes that "the family is the basic unit of society and that it plays a key role in social development and is a strong force of social cohesion and integration ... Greater attention should be paid to helping the family in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles, to the causes and consequences of family desintegration and to the adoption of measures to reconcile work and family life of women and men" (see General Assembly resolution S-24/2, annex, sect. III, para. 56).

The family should also be considered as an important element of social progress and development-related activities within the United Nations system.

In this context, while the follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family is part of the agenda and the multi-year programme of work of the Commission for Social Development until 2006, the family, as the social entity directly involved in the problems affecting family members, should be maintained on the future agenda and programme of work of the Commission for Social Development as a core agent in social policy and development.